

INDO-CHINA

Indo-China is one of the most recent countries on which the spotlight of world politics has been turned. A few weeks ago there were many who believed that its strategic importance might precipitate a Pacific war. We here present the personal accounts of two women authors concerning this little-known yet much talked about part of Asia.

The first deals with the coast of southern Indo-China, which has just been occupied by Japan. Who in former years had ever heard of Cam Ranh Bay? None but a few of the French officials, officers, and merchants who had made distant Indo-China, so far removed from the political bustle of the world, their home. Cam Ranh Bay lay peacefully asleep on the south-eastern coast of Indo-China, inhabited by a few Annamite fishermen and rarely seen by white men.

In the summer of 1939 the Bay impinged upon the consciousness of the newspaper readers of the world for the first time, through the disaster that befell a French submarine. But the name of the Bay did not make a lasting impression on the memories of most people.

It was not until the southern expansion of Japan began (about which more will be found in the documentary Appendix) that those interested in politics looked for the first time towards French Indo-China. The term "Cam Ranh Bay" began to appear more often in newspaper articles and in the telegrams of the news agencies. In a pamphlet of the Institute of Pacific Relations, published early in 1941 and devoted to the southward movement of Japan, the author, Andrew Roth, wrote about the Bay: "A Japanese fleet operating from this base could cut British communications between Hongkong and that 'Gibraltar of the East,' Singapore, and be in an excellent position to out-flank the defense of the Philippines, the coveted Netherlands East Indies, the British Malay States, and consequently threaten the maritime defenses of India."

On July 31, 1941, at seven-thirty in the morning, a Japanese warship with the head of the Japanese military mission to Indo-China, Major-General Raishiro Sumita, entered Cam Ranh Bay, and on the afternoon of the same day a squadron of the Japanese Navy followed. In innumerable telegrams the name of the Bay was flashed to the press of the world. But although this name has now become a fixed term in the political vocabulary as a symbol of Japan's southward expansion, very few people have any conception of the nature of the place. To fill this gap we have enlisted the aid of Mrs. M. Mornand and Mr. W. Lehmann.

Marie Mornand is the pen-name of a world-traveller, who, during the last few years, has many times motored over the road from Hanoi to Saigon, passing Cam Ranh Bay. In this account of her journey and in her photographs she gives a picture of the Bay and the whole strategic southeastern coast of French Indo-China occupied by the Japanese during the last few weeks. Mr. Lehmann is an artist who has rambled far and wide throughout the Orient. His picture in pastel gives his impression of Cam Ranh Bay at sunset.

Mrs. Catherine Lennard is of English-Swedish descent. She has lived much among the French, first studying at the Sorbonne, later making her home in Saigon. At the age of nineteen she published her first book in London. In her "Search of Pompeii" she describes an adventure in the interior of southern Indo-China, in the country of the Mois.—K.M.